

# **If Jesus Did Not Die Upon the Cross**

**A STUDY  
IN EVIDENCE**



**ERNEST BROUGHAM DOCKER, M.A.**

IF JESUS DID NOT DIE  
UPON THE CROSS

A STUDY IN EVIDENCE

BY

ERNEST BROUGHAM DOCKER, M.A.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE, SYDNEY

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT  
ROXBURGHE HOUSE  
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1920

113

## IF JESUS DID NOT DIE UPON THE CROSS

### I

ST. PAUL found the preaching of "a Messiah on a cross to Jews a scandal, to Gentiles an absurdity"; so Mr. E. J. Rawlinson translates (*Foundations*, p. 172).

The intellectual difficulties of the present age chiefly centre upon the Resurrection and its dependent doctrines. In illustration, I quote Mr. Meredith Davies (Review of Eucken's "Can we still be Christians?" *Hibbert Journal*, Oct., 1914, p. 212):

"Miracles, the Virgin Birth, the Descent into Hell, the Ascension into Heaven—what are they to-day? So many loose stones, which some say belong to the foundation of the temple, and which others say are not in the least essential to the building. . . . If Christianity is a system of doctrines and institutions, then he alone is a Christian who accepts that system of things. If, however, the essence of Christianity is embraced within spiritual experience, then one may sit loose to dogmatic developments and still remain a Christian.

Such is Eucken's position, and there is widespread agreement with his point of view. Much of the embodiment of Christianity is alien to its essence and irrelevant to its spirit. . . . Those who feel that the Virgin Birth and the Ascension to Heaven are vital to the Faith are rapidly becoming fewer. Also those who feel that the physical resurrection and the nature miracles of Christ are essential to the Christian position are gradually diminishing in number; while a good deal of credal doctrine is simply and finally obsolete. Certainly Christianity can be isolated from much of its dogmatic formulation without any loss of value, nay, with an increase of purity and relevancy. But how far can we safely carry the process? . . . The hope of the situation is in the newer and bolder Protestantism. It must insist at all costs upon vitality in its truth, modernity in its spirit, relevancy in its message, and spirituality in its life. It may abandon much, providing it continues to build upon the one true foundation. And the foundation of Christianity is not merely spirit, but the Holy Spirit, not merely God, but God in Christ."

The upholders of the orthodox or traditional belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus assert that the death on the cross and the rising from the tomb are historical facts, proved by evidence amply sufficient to warrant their acceptance by reasonable beings. Mr. B. H. Streeter, who does not accept the traditional theory, in his Essay on "Foundations," suggests various hypotheses by which the evidence may be got round or reinterpreted, but he

seems to favour the one which he calls the subjective theory of the appearances of Jesus after the crucifixion. The Rev. R. A. Knox, in his somewhat flippant volume, which would be more appropriately entitled, "Knocks with some loose stones," effectively demolishes these hypotheses.

It is singular, however, that Mr. Streeter does not mention the hypothesis suggested by the title of this Essay. It is not a new one; it was, I believe, an old "heresy" condemned by some Church Council; and there is an old legend still current to which I shall refer later. Perhaps he felt an instinctive aversion from the idea, as I confess I did when the late R. A. Proctor propounded it over thirty years ago in his periodical, *Knowledge*, quoting the passage from Josephus which describes the resuscitation of an acquaintance of his who with two others had hung on a cross for three days. The idea seemed to me utterly subversive of the Gospel preached by Paul; does he not make the assertion that Christ died for our sins the very foundation of his doctrine? It is no doubt some such feeling as this which makes some preachers and writers put aside the theory, which they contemptuously brand "the swoon theory," as being utterly absurd. "Various theories, such as the swoon theory—that Christ did not really die, but revived in the coolness of the tomb, are utterly groundless and unworthy of serious consideration" (*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, W. H. H. Yarrington, M.A., LL.B., Sydney, p. 26). Dr. Sparrow Simpson uses similar language (*The Resurrection*

and *Modern Thought*, p. 43). Such language amounts to an admission that they have not seriously examined the evidence in relation to such theories. But all acknowledge that belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus rests upon historical evidence. Mr. Yarrington says (pp. 47, 48), "Christ rose from the dead and yet there are misnamed rationalists who, not being spiritual, will not believe in the Resurrection of Christ in spite of any evidence. The testimony to the truth of the Resurrection is absolutely irrefragable. There is every kind of evidence possible afforded; the evidence of documents, history, establishment of Christianity, moral and spiritual effects of the faith, consistency of the accounts in all material points, everything in effect that would satisfy an earnest and unprejudiced student." And on a Good Friday not long ago I heard a preacher tell his congregation that the death of Jesus upon the cross was one of the most incontestable facts of history.

I wonder whether the makers of such assertions have ever weighed the evidence; for, having had to deal with matters of evidence for more than the third of a century, I have come to regard the question differently from the way I did when the subject was first brought to my mind. I propose, therefore, in the light of this experience, to examine the evidence bearing upon the question whether Jesus did actually die on the cross.

## II

It will be a useful preliminary to consider the process by which a spectator becomes a witness. Take any ordinary incident, such as a sudden street affray. A passer-by has his attention arrested by it; he becomes interested; he observes what is going on. The image cast by the lens of his eye upon the retina is conveyed in some mysterious way by the nerves to the brain, and an impression is somewhere and somehow made and stored up, which is capable of being afterwards converted into a mental picture of the scene. But this impression is generally an imperfect one. Where events are following one another in rapid succession, the impression becomes blurred as it were; only the most exciting incidents are recorded, and the minor details are obliterated. And much depends upon the power of observation possessed by the spectator. It is a faculty which may be developed and strengthened by training and practice, and it undoubtedly varies considerably in different individuals; and it may be temporarily impaired by excitement or intoxication. The observing faculty may be compared to a photographic plate in the camera. If the exposure has been too brief, the high lights will appear, but the details in the shadows will not be impressed by the actinic light, and no after-development will obtain them.

The spectator is called as a witness to describe

what had taken place. The next faculty that comes into play is that which makes the mental picture—the power of recollection. If the impression made by the observing faculty is blurred, the mental picture will not be clear, and there will be ample room for error in the narrative. Detail will be missing, the order of the important events may be confused. To make the narrative intelligible the memory must be refreshed. Here again the simile of the under-exposed negative may be used. If the photographer has to print from it, he proceeds to improve it by "retouching." With his pencil he will work in detail where there are blanks; he will soften harsh lines, reduce high lights, and even remove features which detract from the harmony of the picture. He thus improves the picture, but in so doing he may make it very different from the object which was photographed. So the witness, using the pencil of imagination, will sketch in incidents which he has not actually observed, but which from other circumstances known to him he infers must have happened. Sometimes the known circumstances raise what is called in law a violent presumption as to the actual occurrence of the inferred fact, and the witness in giving his narrative will relate the incident as having been actually observed by him. The Rev. B. H. Streeter has remarked this tendency "The Historic Christ," *Foundations*, p. 131): "Few even nowadays always distinguish between a fact observed and a seemingly obvious inference made from it at the time."

But it not infrequently happens that the inference suggested by circumstances is not the correct one. Suggestion emanating from some other mind is a potent cause of error. That is the reason for the objection in the law of evidence to "leading questions," in the examination of a witness. How an honest witness by suggestion may be made to support a false alibi is often illustrated in the Courts. Cross-examination is most useful as a refresher of the memory, enabling the witness to recall links which he had dropped in his narrative; but it must be borne in mind that it is also powerful to suggest inferences; it excites the imagination as well as it refreshes the memory.

Finally, the faculty of narration comes into operation—that of adequately transmitting to other intelligences the mental image called up by the recollective faculty. This is a faculty which varies very much in different individuals. It may be cultivated by proper training, and it may be helped in action by judicious questioning; but not infrequently the hearer receives a mental picture very unlike that which the narrator seeks to convey, and so a good observer may make a bad witness.

From the imperfect operation of all or any of these faculties there is ample room for defects and errors to enter into the narrative of an observer. But the field for error is enormously extended when the narrative is repeated by another who has heard it from the observer. In addition to the causes of imperfection in the original narrative, the limitations in the powers of the second narrator come into play.

Through momentary inattention he may miss a passage materially qualifying the rest of the story. By taking what is uttered ironically as said seriously, what is metaphorical as literal, he may misunderstand the whole statement. Again, it is a common phenomenon that the substance only of what has been said is remembered, and in repeating it, not the actual words, but what appropriately conveys the image formed in the hearer's mind—his own language—is used. There is a parlour game founded on this fact; one of the party writes down some little anecdote, and then whispers it to another, he to a third, and so on. The last writes down the version reaching him, and this is compared with the original. The variations are sometimes amazing. This tendency to error is well satirised in the fable of "The Three Black Crows," and it is often illustrated in the law courts. The question of the fallibility of witnesses is discussed by the Rev. J. V. Patton, B.A. ("The Psychology of Report and the Resurrection of our Lord," *The Australian Church Quarterly Review*, June, 1914, p. 125). In this article he quotes from Dr. Whipple of Cornell University: "If the work of reporting is difficult even for the trained expert working under laboratory conditions, and using a carefully refined terminology, how much more difficult must it be for the untrained individual to report with accuracy and completeness the experiences of his daily life, when to the inadequacy of his language there must be added the falsifying influence of undirected attention, mal-observation and errors of memory, not to mention

the falsifying influences that may spring from lack of caution, of zeal for accurate statement, or even from deliberate intent to mislead." And Mr. Patton adds, "With the exception of the deliberate attempt to mislead, it may be said that very probably these influences were at work in those who reported the incidents connected with the Resurrection."

### III

APPLYING these observations as to liability to error on the part of honest witnesses—and it is only honest witnesses that I have been dealing with—to the Gospel narratives of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the discrepancies and contradictions therein can be amply accounted for. It has been suggested that on account of the variations in the narratives none of them can be depended upon, and that the events never happened at all. I am convinced that this is an erroneous inference. I am satisfied that there is a foundation of fact in the story, and that the proper conclusion is that these events actually happened, but that the details in the descriptions of them cannot be relied upon as being strictly accurate. Canon Kennett comes to a similar conclusion (*Interpreter*, April, 1915, p. 279):

"We are surely justified in saying that there is nothing unreasonable in the belief that His body left the tomb on the third day. And if this be true,

we can accept as substantially true the traditions of His appearances, though we are not bound to suppose that they are free from those inconsistencies and inaccuracies which are to be found in the descriptions given by the most truthful people of the same event."

There was, undoubtedly, shortly after the date of the alleged occurrences a widespread, if not universal, belief that Jesus Christ was crucified—that within a comparatively very short time He was taken down from the cross as lifeless, and, owing to the near approach of the Sabbath, was temporarily deposited in a rock-hewn sepulchre situated in an adjacent garden—that on the third day after the crucifixion He was seen by some of His disciples on several occasions, alive and in His normal condition, but with the wounds which He had received still visible. Some have supposed that His body after the crucifixion was endowed with supernatural powers, such as the power of passing through closed doors. This idea is founded on certain expressions in St. John's Gospel. The Rev. G. W. Wade, D.D., remarks (*The Interpreter*, Oct., 1913, p. 45): "In the Gospel reports of our Lord's self-manifestation there is attributed to Him such immateriality as is involved in the ability to pass in and out of a closed chamber. He is described as appearing to His disciples and vanishing from them in a moment (Luke xxiv. 31, 36; John xx. 19, 26). Whilst His body is regarded as solid and tangible, yet to its movements other solid and tangible things constitute no barrier, and cause no impediment." But

there is really no ground for this supposition. The three earlier Evangelists carefully arranged what details they give as to the appearance so as to exclude the idea that what the observers saw was spirit, and not a natural body; and even St. John does not say explicitly that Jesus passed through a closed door. Taking the words he uses as literally correct, it is a reasonable explanation to say that Jesus must have remained in concealment in Jerusalem until His return to Galilee. It is expressly stated that He did not appear in public. Obviously, if the authorities became aware that He was alive He would be rearrested and re-executed; and so St. John says that the doors were shut "for fear of the Jews." The doors so shut would be the outer doors. The most likely place for such concealment would be the house of His friends, where He and His disciples were accustomed to assemble, where He could be supplied with food, where He could have His wounds attended to. The outer doors being shut would not prevent Him from coming from another part of the house into the room where the disciples were assembled. He might even have been in the room before they came in, unperceived until He came and stood in their midst.

It is from St. Luke's story of the journey to Emmaus that it has been supposed that the risen Jesus had power to become invisible. He "vanished out of their sight" when He went out of the house. Dr. Arthur Wright goes so far as to assert that He was "one moment at Emmaus and the next in Jerusalem. At one instant He is in the world of



sense; at another in the world of spirit" ("Christ's Claim," etc., *The Interpreter*, July, 1916, p. 385), apparently forgetting that according to St. Luke's account the two disciples left Emmaus after He did and arrived at the room in Jerusalem before Him. But is it difficult to believe that St. Luke meant anything more than that He went away quickly (having to return to Jerusalem), when it is remembered that the story is followed immediately by the proofs which Jesus gave that His body was still flesh and bone, and not spirit. His disappearance in a moment is simply read into the narrative.

The facts which I suggest are the foundation of the Gospel narratives gave rise to two important inferences: first, that when Jesus collapsed on the cross, and His apparently lifeless body was deposited in the sepulchre, He was actually dead. Secondly, that in the early morning of the third day, after an interval of some thirty-six hours, a stupendous but not unprecedented miracle occurred, and the soul of Jesus returned to the inanimate body and reanimated it. It is manifest that the importance of this second inference depends upon the validity of the first.

The idea that dead bodies may be reanimated was prevalent in the time of our Lord, and for many hundreds of years both before and after; in fact, wherever scientific investigation has been undeveloped. We have one instance in the history of Elijah, two in that of Elisha; there are three recorded in the Gospels, besides that of Jesus himself, and two in the Acts. Irenæus speaks of frequent

instances where "the spirit has returned to the ex-animated body, and the man has been granted to the prayers of the church."

An interesting instance of this belief, at the present day, in an unscientific people is to be found in an article by the Rev. W. Montgomery, M.A., B.D., entitled, "Schweitzer as Missionary" (*Hibbert Journal*, July, 1914, p. 885):

"But Schweitzer's own claim as a magician rests on more solid grounds than the possession of a fetish. The wonders of modern surgery leave magic limping in the rear. The thing which impresses natives most is the use of anæsthetics. The girls in the mission school write letters to those in a school in Europe. In one of those letters you may read: 'Since the Doctor came here wonderful things are happening. First, he kills sick people; then he cures them; then he raises them to life again.' What larger reputation could a wonder-worker desire?"

And the following extract (*Physical Culture and Health*, July 15, 1912) seems to show that even skilled physicians may be mistaken in pronouncing death to have taken place in certain cases:

"Bringing the Dead to Life.—A remarkable device has just been introduced by a German. It is styled the 'pulmotor,' and it has been successfully used on people pronounced dead by physicians, bringing them back to life, and, what is more, in perfect health. A young man named Haas, asphyxiated by coal gas, whom his friends after three hours' work failed to restore to consciousness, was given up as dead. After three hours' work with the

pulmotor the man was able to sit up and express wonder, and thanks, declaring that he felt as well as before he was overcome. A doctor who was called in before the apparatus was employed, said that, speaking medically, Haas was in a state of death when he arrived. Haas is the fifth man who has been 'called back.' "

That the signs of death are sometimes simulated in the still living body, and that delicate tests are necessary to ascertain the real fact, is manifest from the following passage from *Taylor's Medical Jurisprudence* (Sixth Edition, p. 243), where this quotation is taken from the *Lancet*, Vol. I, 1900, under the heading, "Premature Burial":

"Cases have undoubtedly presented themselves in which persons labouring under concussion, syncope, catalepsy, hysteria, or lifelessness from exhaustion, have been pronounced dead by bystanders, merely because there happened to be inanimation, coldness of the surface, and no outward signs of respiration or circulation. If the decision of the question of life or death was always left to such persons, and interments were to follow in a few hours upon their dictation, there is no doubt living bodies would be exposed to the risk of premature burial. But this can rarely happen in any civilized country of Europe, and then only as the result of gross or culpable neglect."

The Editor says (p. 246):

"The remedy for an evil of this kind is not to discover some certain sign of death to guide ignorant persons—for it would be always dangerous to

give them a power of judging—but to enforce strictly the following: 1. That no body shall be buried within twenty-four hours of death. 2. To amend the law regarding the registration of deaths and births so that (a) no body shall be buried without a certificate signed by a qualified registered medical man or a Coroner; (b) such certificate shall only be given by these gentlemen after proof of the death of the person so certified to be dead. . . . If we allow a proper interval to elapse after the supposed death, there can be no difficulty in solving the question whether a person is really dead, even before any of those changes which arise from putrefaction have manifested themselves. The circumstances on which we may rely as furnishing conclusive evidence of death are the following: (1) The absence of circulation and respiration for at least *an hour*, the stethoscope being always employed; (2) the gradual cooling of the body, the trunk remaining warm while the members are cold; and (3) as the body cools the supervention of a rigid state of the muscles, successively attacking the limbs and trunk, and ultimately spreading through the whole muscular system. When these conditions are observed the proof of death is conclusive."

Applying these principles to the instances of revivification above mentioned,—if they had happened at the present day, should we have any hesitation in saying that the Shunamite lad was unconscious from sunstroke; that Eutychus was stunned by his fall; that the daughter of Jairus was suffering from exhaustion from her illness? It was the bystanders

who with the certainty of ignorance ("knowing that she was dead") laughed to scorn the declaration of Him Who really knew that "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." He used similar language in reference to Lazarus, and it was only when He found it necessary to speak down to the comprehension of His disciples that He said, "Lazarus is dead." Should we have any hesitation in saying that this, and the cases of the lad of Zarephath, of the body thrown into Elisha's tomb, of the young man of Nain, and of Dorcas, were instances of conditions simulating death, probably catalepsy?

#### IV

We are now in a position to approach the question whether Jesus really died upon the cross. Taking the Gospel accounts as they stand, there is an entire absence of all the criteria which distinguish actual from apparent death. There was a hurried depositing in the sepulchre within three hours of the collapse upon the cross. There was no medical autopsy, no stethoscope test, no inquest with the evidence of those who had last to do with Him. We have no account from Joseph of Arimathea who placed Him in his own tomb; none from Nicodemus who is said to have been with Joseph and to have supplied the usual burial spices and ointment; none from the gardener who under the circumstances might have been a material witness. The piercing

of the side, if that was an actual occurrence—it is not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels—is negative either way. It simply indicated that the blood had not coagulated. Coagulation would not occur during life, and might not take place till the lapse of four or more hours after actual death.

There is no statement as to when He left the tomb. He was first seen by any person unconnected with the burial early on the third morning. Should any one be misled by the expression "burial" into supposing that there was an interment and that consequently even if He were still alive when buried He must soon have been suffocated; it must be pointed out that the sepulchre was a rock-hewn chamber of considerable size, the entrance closed by a circular slab of stone, like a huge grindstone, rolling in a groove in front of the opening, and not likely to hermetically seal the chamber. But it is quite consistent with the accounts that He revived under the treatment of Joseph and Nicodemus the first night. It is true that St. Matthew's Gospel has a marvellous legend of an earthquake on the third morning, in which an Angel descended from Heaven and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. But this does not even profess to be the narrative of an eyewitness; it is an inference—an imagination of what must have taken place. Such an imagination would be perhaps natural to the writer, familiar with the belief in the ministration of Angels. The growth of the legend can be traced in the other Gospels, and the culmination of it is to be found in one of the apocryphal Gospels. This and that other

legend, how the disciples came and stole the body *while the guard slept*, are mutually contradictory. Mr. Harold Temperley explains how such legends grow ("On the Supernatural Element in History," *Contemporary Review*, Aug., 1916):

"No one who has watched the progress of legends round camp fires can doubt that a very few days can produce a monstrous legend, and that a very small hint of the extraordinary will soon be elaborately embellished by exquisite artists."

## V

THE process of converting inferences into facts is still going on, and I must notice here a suggestion which has since become a theory (known as the Latham theory), from which it is contended that there is sufficient evidence to convince us of the resurrection from actual death of Jesus, as it is alleged that it was sufficient to convince St. John. It is the theory of the grave-clothes, founded on the passage in St. John's Gospel (xx. 4-8). The passage reads: "And they ran both together; and the other disciple outran Peter and came first to the tomb: and peeping in (*παρακύψας*) he notices (*βλεπέι*) the linen bandages lying (*κείμενα*). He did not, however, enter. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and he entered the tomb; and he beholdeth (*θεωρεῖ*) the linen bandages lying and the napkin which had been upon His head, not lying with the

linen bandages, but rolled up (*ἐντετυλιγμένον*) separately in another place. Then, therefore, entered also the other disciple who came first to the tomb, and he saw (*ἑίδε*) and believed; for not yet did they know the scripture that it was necessary for Him to rise again from the dead." It might have been added with equal truth: And not yet did they know His own prophecy that He should rise from the dead after three days.

From this simple narrative, very possibly derived from one of the actors in the incident, the astounding inference has been drawn that the body of Jesus "evaporated," as it were, from the bandages and napkin, leaving the bandages still in the form of being wound round a body, but pressed flat; and further, that in order thus to evaporate the body had been changed from "matter" into "spirit."

Dr. Sparrow Simpson (*The Resurrection and Modern Thought*, p. 37) gives the history of the genesis of this theory. The Rev. Arthur Beard starts it in 1873. His suggestions are taken up and elaborated by Mr. Latham. Dr. Sparrow Simpson quotes him thus:

"We read 'he did not, however, go in.' Why is he careful to tell us this? Why does he use the word 'however'? Does not this word imply 'as he might naturally have been expected to do'? I incline to think that he was startled at the sight of the grave-clothes; he expected to find that the body had been taken away, but it never entered into his head that the body would be taken and the grave-clothes left. That the grave-clothes should remain

in the tomb at all might make him wonder a little, but that they should be lying undisturbed, as he would find out that they did, would give him infinitely more to wonder at. On first reaching the tomb he was struck by the sight of them seen through the door, and what he especially notes is *that they were lying flat*, and not, as might have been expected, in a heap. Very naturally, he stopped for a moment and gazed. . . . Now the word used for 'rolled up' (*ἐντετυλιγμένον*) is employed (Matt. xxvii. 59, and Luke xxiii, 53) to express that wrapping of the Lord's body in the linen clothes, and it implies here that the napkin had been wrapped round the head and partially retained the annular form thus given it; I take it to mean that it was *not* folded so as to lie flat with the clothes."

It will be noticed that to give some foundation for the theory it was necessary to interpolate the words *flat* and *undisturbed*, for which there is no suggestion in the Greek word *κειμένα*. Thus is it made to appear plausible that the linen bandages had been pressed down by the weight of the spices after the body had evaporated. The Greek word *ἐντετυλιγμένον*, translated *wrapped*, may possibly imply that the napkin had been twisted turban-like about the head, and that in the place apart it still retained that form. But it is difficult to see how this helps the theory, as it could be equally well accounted for on a "naturalistic" hypothesis. Let us try to picture what would happen if before or after completion of the bandaging symptoms of returning animation appeared. Should we not

expect the operators immediately to slip off and fling away the folded napkin from the head without waiting to undo knots or fastenings, in order to give air to the lungs now resuming their function? Would they not then unwind the swathing bandages, which would lie in a heap on the floor as they were unwound?

Dr. Sparrow Simpson also goes too far when he says (p. 47): "Believing as we do that all the evidence concurs in declaring that the grave was vacant, the interpretation of the fact must be ultimately one of two things: either this was a human work, or else it was the work of God. Either human hands removed the corpse or the Almighty raised the dead. That is exactly the question." I venture to submit that that is not exactly the question. What if the supposed corpse was not really dead, and revived? I confidently submit that this interpretation of the fact of the vacant grave is ample and satisfactory. It postulates neither fraud nor miracle.

## VI

ON a "naturalistic," and indeed on any, theory an interesting question arises. No evangelist expressly states, but unquestionably it is implied, that on the occasions when Jesus reappeared He was dressed in some clothing. Whence did this clothing come? His own garments were not

available, for the soldiers had appropriated them. The grave-clothes were not taken from the tomb. It was in view of this question that I suggested that the gardener might at an inquest have been a material witness.

When I began this essay I had not met with any writer who had discussed this subject ; but recently two have dealt with it, on the lines of the Latham theory.

The Rev. Robert Vaughan asks ("After His Resurrection," *Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1916, p. 353) :

"Did common clothes hang upon the risen body of Christ? Had He picked them up in the gardener's hut? These questions are involved in any naturalistic interpretation of the accounts of the appearance of our Lord. That His resurrection body, though containing the substances of His natural body, even the flesh and bones, was in another state than that of the 'material' is evident from its phenomena;" (As will have been seen, I entirely dissent from this assertion.) "and thus the conjunction with it of garments of a material kind would be entirely inconsistent. It is only to make very evident the impossibility of a natural origin of the clothing that this point is examined as it is. The clothing then did not come out of or consist of any material substance.

"Did it then exist only in the imagination of Mary? It did exist in her imagination in the sense that all perceptions of form, colour, etc., even of matter 'exist' only in the imaging faculty of the

mind. The 'existence' of a thing is that which *stands forth* to sense in phenomena, and is the expression of the thing. It must be distinguished from the thing as it is in itself—from the substance. . . . It is true in the sense of the above observations that the clothing existed only in the mind of Mary. But that does not mean that there was no objective substance, no reality, outside her mind from which her perceptions proceeded. If her imaging was entirely from her mind, then there was no reality behind the phenomena ; but if the phenomena proceeded from and *expressed* some fact outside herself, the *real* was within the vision of the clothes, even though it did not convey all the truth to her, but only a part. This real, whatever it was, was something which was attached to or hung about the person of Christ ; for it was given by, and, if you will, out of, His presence. It is thus of His nature and state ; it is like Himself, spirit. . . . (p. 355). In the vision of Mary there were gardener's clothes. Outside her vision there was no such clothing. But there was about the person of Christ a something, an entity, which then, and to her alone, we may say, became the garments of a gardener. We may infer from the narrative that when she became aware that it was her Lord who was present, then that which was to her gardener's clothes became the ordinary dress of Christ, and ultimately ceased to give any phenomenal expression when He disappeared. Here, then, we have in spirit a true substance which may express itself intermittently and also variously. . . . So far, however,

we have not accounted for the particular kind of clothes—those of a gardener. We may assume that when our Lord appears as a gardener He is therefore attired appropriately. But how comes it that He appears under the semblance of a gardener? He appears in a garden, which had, indirectly, something to do with it. Mary does not yet know that He is alive. And though He has arisen in His former body, it is now spirit, and as spirit has no form. In His approach, if we may speak of what is not a movement in space under that idea, Mary becomes sensible in her spirit of the nearness of a personality. She sees no one. Is it behind her? She turns, and since the gardener is her first idea, she sees Jesus as the gardener. This was probably assisted by her having been meditating upon whether it was the gardener who had removed the body. If our construction is correct, we come to this: that the form which spiritual substance takes is adapted to the mind to which it expresses itself, and changes into its more expressive or truthful form when the spiritual apprehension is correct . . . (p. 356). When we examine other appearances of our Lord we find that the phenomena recorded give support to what has been advanced. Take, first, the appearance to the two on the way to Emmaus. They are wayfarers, travelling in the open country. Some personality is sensibly realized. The knowledge is not given by outward vision, but begins in a spiritual contact. They have no thought of Jesus as having risen from the dead, and so there is no preparation for apprehending Him in His

previous form. In His own person, as a spirit, He has no fixed form, no form indeed, in Himself. But the personality can, and does, take form; and the character of the form He takes to them is determined by their own minds. The locality in which they are most naturally suggests another wayfarer; and so they see Him as such in appearance and dress, and possibly with a traveller's staff in His hand . . . (p. 357). The appearance to the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias and the mistake of the disciples has been feebly put down to the misty morning." (What mistake? and why *feebly*?) "But looking at the natural import of the narrative—and especially if we give due significance to the question, 'Children, have ye any meat?'—it is clear that Jesus first appeared to them under the character of one who had come down to the beach to buy fish for food. The disciples had returned to their fishing, and, had they been successful, they would have disposed of their taking by selling them. But they have caught nothing, and have nothing to sell. What wonder, then, that when the presence of the Lord touches their spirits, they see Him, and hear Him too, as one who has come to buy food?"

"Here, again, the familiar form is not present until the inner sense of the personality is correct. . . . In those cases in which our Lord is at once recognized, we have further evidence of the explanation which has been given of His appearances under strange forms. When He was at once known by the two women on their way to deliver the

message to the angel, their minds were full of the thought that Christ was alive. The appearance, therefore, answered to the state of their minds. So also when He came amongst the assembled disciples, the same thing happens. Their thoughts were full of Him, and so they see the familiar form, even to the marks in the hands and feet." (Which marks, by the way, the disciples had not seen before) . . . (p. 359). "The personality of Christ creates, gives, the *substantia* of both body and clothes, and communicates to them all that is of their essence or being; the perceiving mind *makes* the distinguishing characteristics under which they are individually realized. I think it may now be said without being misconstrued that the garments of our Lord came from His own person . . . (p. 360). The personality of our Lord had the power to create for itself body and clothing, and not one body but many. Observe my sense of 'create.' In this sense all spirit creates; it effects phenomena. His person became not only body, the proper organ of personality, but it became things, garments, which seem to be devoid of personality. He did not gather about Him an outside material to make those garments, nor did He materialize Himself. His own person contained the potency which was able to create the clothes, and to do many other things of the like kind. . . . The fire and the bread and the fish were from out of the personality of Christ, who, as we have seen, can give being to things. . . . On another occasion He asked His disciples for food, in order, it would appear from the narrative, to give the better proof

of the reality of His resurrection. . . . They gave Him a piece of fish, and He took the fish in His hand—the material thing—with its own properties was placed in touch with His spiritual body, and its properties were changed. . . . A touch of Christ induced a change within the substance, so that it was not subject to the attraction of the earth. He then assimilated and incorporated into His spiritual body the substance of the food. It ceased to be 'matter.' Spirit it was, and spirit it returned."

Dr. Arthur Wright ("Christ's Claim," etc., *The Interpreter*, July, 1916) takes up these amazing fancies without any acknowledgment (so far as I can see) either to Vaughan or Latham. I have quoted so fully from Mr. Vaughan's paper, in order to avoid any misrepresentation of his views, that I cannot do the same with respect to Dr. Wright's. Though both Beard and Latham, and Mr. Vaughan, also to a certain extent, wrote in tentative and guarded terms, he treats these inferences and assumptions as established facts. (But he does draw the line at the fish becoming spirit.) He admits, however, that "the tendency at first was to multiply miracles and never to accept a rational interpretation if a supernatural one could be found." But he apparently approves of this tendency. He quotes apocrypha, and declares that "By an effort of will or in the power of the Spirit He became so destitute of weight that He could be carried by a single hair." I quite concede that if anyone can believe all this he will have no difficulty in accepting the miraculous resuscitation



of the lifeless corpse of Jesus. But in this present age of inquiry I suspect that most people will act on the opposite principle, enunciated by Dr. Sparrow Simpson (*The Resurrection and Modern Thought*, p. 201): "We have no right to assume miracles when natural explanations suffice." (The hypothesis of) "the supernatural revelation of detailed historic incidents raises more problems than it solves."

## VII

CONTRAST these wild fancies with the simple requirements of the "naturalistic" theory, which can accept the Gospel narratives as being substantially correct and yet consonant with scientific experience.

Going back to the discovery of returning animation, as suggested above, what might we reasonably conjecture would be the course of events? Before the revived Jesus could be removed from the tomb some clothing must be procured. If the gardener was assisting in the burial arrangements, would it not be natural for him to run to his cottage, probably situated in the garden or near at hand, for his holiday garments to supply the need? If he were not of the party, still the garden cottage would be the most likely place to send to for clothes in the emergency. As soon as Jesus was sufficiently recovered, He would be removed from the tomb to the cottage till He could be conveyed to a place of safety. So He would probably be within the pre-

cincts of the garden when Mary Magdalene and the other woman came early in the morning. They receive a message, perhaps from the gardener or his assistant (afterwards converted by growth of legend into an angel or two) telling them of His rising and of His intention to return to Galilee. They would also have an opportunity for seeing Him themselves—being known as His friends.

The Emmaus journey presents difficulties to critics, and it has been much discussed; but, assuming it to be a real incident and to have happened on the day of the resurrection, I see no difficulty in accepting the account as substantially according to fact; for reasons already mentioned we cannot depend upon the accuracy of the details. Jesus had left a message for His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. But He knew that if His enemies became aware of His resurrection He would be sought for and rearrested. He may have thought it advisable to leave Jerusalem at once in a direction opposite to the road to Galilee, where He would be less likely to be traced. There would be no impossibility in His doing this, though the nail-punctures in His feet would make walking painful. The pain would probably increase as He went on, and eventually He might find it necessary to return to the house of His friends in Jerusalem, after dark, perhaps with the assistance of the two disciples—there to remain in retirement until His wounds had healed sufficiently to allow Him to undertake the journey to Galilee.

## VIII

If then the evidence as it stands fails to establish death on the cross as a fact, on what grounds is any one required to accept it as an article of faith? Various answers have been given to the question.

Some say: On the authority of the Church. This is the answer of the school to which Mr. Knox belongs. He tells us that he does believe certain statements, however incredible they may appear, because the Church declares them to be facts. He believes, for instance, on the authority of the ninth Article that since the "Ascension" the earth has been so many pounds the lighter notwithstanding the investigations of scientists which go to show that the earth is continually growing heavier through the accretion of meteoric dust and other cosmic matter in its journey through space. And he tells us that he would not believe certain other doctrinal statements, such as the sinlessness of Christ, if they were not vouched for by the Church.

Now it is undoubtedly a fact that the vast majority of the individuals constituting the Christian Church, from the earliest age—that of the Apostles, to the present day, have unquestioningly believed that Jesus did die upon the cross; and if a solitary individual here and there ventured to raise his voice in dissent it was drowned in the shouting of the multitude. There have even been periods in the history of the Church when such a person would

run a grave risk of being roasted to death, not as a martyr, but as a heretic. The belief has been an inherited one, accepted without inquiry into its validity. Even so far back as the fourth century B.C. this tendency was observed. Thucydides says in his history: "It is the custom of mankind, even where their own country is concerned, to acquiesce with complacent credulity in the traditions of former ages without subjecting them to the test of critical examination." (Quoted by J. Ellis Barker, "Democracy and War's Iron Broom," *Nineteenth Century and After*, Feb., 1916, p. 290.)

What can be said against this claim on behalf of the Church to make authoritative statements of historical fact, without or against historical evidence? Let others speak whose thoughts have not been directed to the question I am discussing. Nearly seventy years ago the Rev. F. W. Robertson said (*Sermons*, 3rd Series, 1850, p. 41): "The belief of the whole world cannot make that thing true to me which to me seems false. The conscience of the whole world cannot make a thing right to me, if I in my heart believe it wrong." And a well-known writer, Mr. W. S. Lilly, is very bold and says (*Nineteenth Century and After*, May, 1912): "If there is one lesson written more legibly than another upon the annals of the world, it is that majorities are almost always wrong: that truth is the prerogative of minorities—nay, it may even be a minority of one. That is the verdict of history. It holds good of all ages. It specially holds good of the times in which we live." We think of Elijah

believing himself in a minority of one, of Athanasius *contra mundum*. The Rev. W. Temple enunciates similar ideas ("The Church," *Foundations*, p. 352):

"If we consider, after full examination of the evidence, that an article of the Creed is false, or a custom of the Church injurious, we must, of course, reject. But we must still remember that the facts we have considered have probably been considered by the Church, which may well have had other evidence which is not before us. The accumulated experience of Christendom is the basis on which the beliefs and practice of the Church are grounded; it may be the duty of an individual to set himself against the belief and practice current in his day—every true prophet does so to some extent. At any time the synthesis already made is bound to be inadequate, and progress is won through the perception of this inadequacy by the individual man of genius."

And Canon Hensley Henson (now Bishop of Hereford) says ("The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Hibbert Journal*, 1904, p. 477):

"We who are religious teachers ought to accept biblical criticism frankly and gladly, nor need we be greatly disturbed if such acceptance involve the abandonment of many traditional beliefs. Every generation is responsible for its treatment of its opportunities; it cannot shelter itself behind the decisions of the past. Thus it appears altogether irrelevant to object to the conclusions of modern research and legitimate criticism that they do not coincide with theories of former ages, in which men

neither possessed the knowledge nor were afflicted with the problems of the modern Church. . . . The authority of any historical statement entirely depends upon its character as a satisfactory inference from the evidence upon which it must be presumed to rest."

If there is validity in these statements, put so forcibly by various writers, we cannot admit the claim of "the Church" to close all discussion of doctrines upon which she has pronounced judgment.

With regard to Mr. Temple's suggestion that the Church may have been in possession of evidence which is no longer existent—it is difficult to see what other evidence there could have been ever extant tending to show that Jesus died upon the cross; and still more difficult to accept the hypothesis that the conclusive evidence has been lost, while the inconclusive has been preserved.

## IX

THE *a priori* argument is often advanced that it was necessary for Jesus to die, and therefore He did die upon the Cross. But when the question is asked why was it necessary for Him to die? the answers are various. It is said that His death was foretold by Prophets, "and the Scriptures must be fulfilled," and so He did die and rose again "according to the Scriptures," as St. Paul puts it. He did not, how-

ever, specify the passage he had in mind, but Dr. Arthur Wright confidently asserts that it is Hosea vi. 2. Now it is agreed by competent critics that it is only by tearing the words from their context and twisting them from their original meaning that this or any other passage can be made to refer to the death and resurrection of Jesus. It must be remembered, too, that Paul from his rabbinical training was fond of allegorizing the Scriptures.

St. Peter seems to have been the first to use this kind of argument in his Pentecostal sermon, but his contention was, not that it was necessary for Jesus to die, but that having been judicially murdered by wicked men, it was necessary for Him to rise again; quoting the sixteenth Psalm. It has been shown, however, that this Psalm was written many centuries after David's time, and that its meaning is altogether different from that attributed to it by Peter.

It is urged, moreover, that Jesus Himself predicted His death and resurrection after three days, and He must be taken to foresee the future as well as to know the past. That Jesus had a presentiment that He would meet with death at the hands of the religious authorities of the Jews—the prophet's usual fate, and that he expressed His forebodings to His disciples, I firmly believe; but I am equally convinced that He did not predict His rising again. The conduct of the disciples after His crucifixion shows that they had no expectation of a resurrection; and it is altogether incredible that they could

have forgotten a prediction so remarkable, uttered for their consolation, repeated several times a few days before the event, while they remembered many other less striking sayings. It is expressly stated that they did not understand what He said, so it is manifest that they afterwards inferred that this prediction was what He meant to convey to them by the words they did not understand. How the belief arose is, I think, not difficult to trace, but to discuss it would take me too far from my subject.

There have in all ages been discussions as to the necessity for the death of Jesus, but for my present purpose I need only refer to some of the statements of modern writers. It is ever being more fully recognized that the efficacy of the transaction of the cross results from the perfect self-sacrifice and self-surrender of Jesus to the Will of God, thereby manifesting the love of God for Man.

Dr. A. H. McNeile says ("Law, Sin, and Sacrifice," *The Interpreter*, July, 1913, p. 378):

"We can never gain a true conception of God or of the sacrifice of Christ as long as we think of that sacrifice as a means of propitiating an angry Deity . . . (p. 382). We cannot rightly understand Christ's perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, until we see in the New Testament word 'propitiation' the exalted meaning to which God had gradually led the people of Israel through the long course of their religious development," viz. "the fullest meaning that we give to the word 'atone.'"

The Rev. F. W. Robertson preached (*Sermons*, 3rd series, 1850, p. 98) :

"The value of the death of Christ consisted in the surrender of self-will. In the fortieth Psalm, the value of every other kind of sacrifice being first denied, the words follow 'Then said I lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.' The profound idea contained, therefore, in the death of Christ is the duty of self-surrender."

This was the view of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. x.). Mr. A. E. J. Rawlinson writes ("The Interpretation of the Christ," *Foundations*, p. 197) :

"To an understanding of sacrifice the author of Hebrews himself gives us the clue : for him as well as for ourselves the essence of sacrifice is after all discovered to reside not in any merely external ritual, whether on earth or in Heaven, but in the voluntary obligation and dedication of life for others' sake, in uttermost obedience, even unto death."

In the same volume Mr. W. H. Moberley writes ("The Atonement," p. 331) :

"Only by making the self-sacrifice of Calvary a witness to the eternal love of God, Who indwells in the world and in all men, and Who is about the path and the bed of every one of us, can we . . . explain to this generation the significance of the Atonement for modern religion in terms of moral experience. Only so can it be made intelligible ; and what is not intelligible will form no part of personal religion." Also :

"The historical facts of the life and death of Jesus Christ can only affect the whole universe in so far as they are more than merely historical. They have a genuinely 'sacramental' character, being, in the words of the Church Catechism, 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.' They embody a principle which is a structural law of the universe."

"It is easy to see what principle these historical facts embody. It is the spirit of inexhaustible love of men and readiness of self-sacrifice on their behalf. And the practical meaning of the assertion of the divinity of Christ is that these qualities characterize God himself, and so belong to the very structure of the universe."

The Rev. Buchanan Blake, B.D., says ("The Teaching of Jesus," *The Interpreter*, January, 1916, p. 202) :

"The Cross was the lifting up, the exaltation of the Christ ; and when it came to pass He would draw all men to Him by the wondrous magnetic power of its self-sacrifice. The saving, mediatorial, reconciling power in Christ all the time was to be made fully manifest by His death. The meaning of His life was to be seen in His death. There was to be nothing passive or involuntary about it. It was a voluntary obedience and a going home to the Father."

The Rev. O. C. Quick writes ("Self-Sacrifice and Individual Immortality," *The Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1916, p. 258) :

"Our Lord triumphed over death, not because

death seemed to Him unimportant or unreal, but because in obedience to the will of God He was content to undergo all the tremendously real suffering and horror which His death involved. The death of the Cross is not an incident in a life of self-conscious majesty; it is the culmination of a completed life of sacrifice. . . . Looking at the life of his Lord, the Christian maintains that suffering and death are for him almost a sacrament. They are the outward and visible signs to us of the complete self-surrender and self-sacrifice that are needed before this mortal can put on immortality, before the earthly life can pass the threshold of eternity. . . . During the earlier part of his missionary career St. Paul believed that the majority of Christian converts would not undergo physical death before the second coming of our Lord finally brought the Kingdom of God to earth. But this error only enabled him to grasp more firmly the central truth that physical death is only an outward symbol of the great fact that through self-sacrifice alone can the human personality enter upon life eternal. Self-sacrifice in its deepest sense means a giving away of all we are and all we have. And so to St. Paul the true death, which is the very gate of heaven, is not simply the death of the body, but the complete self-sacrifice, the need of which physical death is meant to teach. The death of Christ was only the culminating act of a life of self-sacrifice in obedience to the Will of God. . . . From the beginning all self-sacrifice on earth is a process of dying to live; this dying to live is not confined in its manifestation to

the death of the body. Physical death is but the outward sign of the need for spiritual sacrifice and marks the culmination of the process of sacrifice upon earth. . . . The self-sacrifice which shows itself on earth only as a dying to live will remain in heaven as the joyful giving of a deathless life."

The Rev. S. P. T. Prideaux says ("The Historical Elements in Christianity," *The Interpreter*, Oct., 1917, p. 80):

"The 'merit' of Christ's death lay, not in the actual dying, not in the shedding of His Blood, but in the entire consecration of His Will, which His readiness to give even His life, if necessary, signalized; the death was the outcome of His life; it was as it were incidental, not essential."

I have quoted these passages at length from authors to whose minds the question whether Jesus actually died on the Cross had not presented itself, because they concur in the conclusion that the efficacy of the transaction of the Cross consisted in the willing self-sacrifice and self-surrender of Jesus to the Will of His Father, thereby manifesting the inextinguishable and inexhaustible love of His Father and of Himself for mankind. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish" (John iii. 16). "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9).

Now, it must be emphasized that this purpose did not necessitate actual death on the Cross. True

it is that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). But the sacrifice does not create the love; it manifests the love that is already existent, and that love will be equally manifested by proof of *willingness* to die for others.

When I was a child I was taught that the sacrifice on Mount Moriah was an antitype of that on Calvary. Abraham was in act to slay his son, whom doubtless he loved more than his own life, in obedience to the Divine Will as he understood it. But the heavenly voice stayed the knife: "Lay not thy hand upon the lad; for *now I know* that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." His obedience was fully proved.

We see the same test of devotion and love constantly occurring. The officer who in the trenches threw himself upon a live bomb to save his comrades, and was blown to pieces, displayed the greater love. But it was equally displayed by that other officer who did the same act but was not killed, though grievously wounded. It was equally displayed by the midshipman who at the bombardment of Sebastopol picked up the shell which had fallen on the deck of the *Tiger* and dropped it overboard before it exploded.

And Mr. Rawlinson observes ("The Interpretation of the Christ," *Foundations*, p. 195) with regard to the Jewish sacrifices:

"The nearest approach to a theory of sacrifice contained in the Levitical law is to be found in the words 'The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I

have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life' (Lev. xvii. 11). In other words, the efficacy of sacrifice, in so far as any orthodox rationale of it existed at all, was understood to lie in the fact that it was not primarily an infliction of death but an offering of life. The death of the victim was merely incidental and preliminary to the sacrifice proper, viz. the offering of the blood (representing the life) upon the altar."

We may conclude, therefore, that by no rational theory was it necessary that Jesus should die upon the Cross.

Yet both Mr. W. H. Moberley and Canon Streeter think that it was necessary. The former says ("The Atonement," *Foundations*, p. 311): "To the perfecting" (of the human character of Jesus) "the death was necessary in two ways. . . . In the light of this principle we can dimly see how the fact of sin and the requirements of holiness made it necessary that Jesus should die." Thus Mr. Moberley perceives, though dimly, that the death was necessary for the perfecting of the human character of Jesus. But the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews did not think so. He undoubtedly believed, in common with all of his time, that the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross culminated in His death; but it was the *suffering*, not the *death*, that perfected His character. "It became God"—it was in accordance with His essential being—"for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation

perfect through suffering" (Heb. xi. 10). And again, "Christ in the days of His flesh having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 7-9).

This passage, if it stood alone in the Epistle, would go far to indicate that the writer believed Jesus to have been saved from death; that His prayers in the extreme of physical agony and mental anguish, which had even wrung from Him the despairing cry of the suffering Psalmist—"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me"—were heard by His all-loving Father, and answered, not by the appearance of legions of angels, but by the merciful anodyne of unconsciousness.

Canon Streeter regards the death of Jesus as necessary for an entirely different reason—the redemption of humanity. He says ("The Historic Christ," *Foundations*, p. 127): "Not enough was it to have proclaimed the new ideal in penetrating phrase, not enough to have lived a life of service and self-denial. Of Him who was to be the supreme agent in the regeneration of mankind the supreme sacrifice of all is asked. From such an act as this goes forth power. One thing is lacking ere humanity is redeemed from the miseries of this present life. Before the Kingdom of God can appear a price

must be paid—and the price is the life of the 'King.'"

This is eloquent rhetoric, culminating in the familiar metaphor of the payment of a price. But to the questions what does it stand for? To whom is the price to be paid? And why? there is no satisfying answer.

## X

ONE more argument must be noticed. It may be called the *a posteriori* argument: that if Jesus had not died on the Cross and risen again then the facts which did occur in the after-life of the Church could not have happened. The Rev. J. B. Grant thus disposes of the argument ("The Equation of Easter and Pentecost," *The Interpreter*, January, 1917, p. 165):

"The theory that without the Resurrection the Church would not at first have risen at all has little to recommend it. It is merely a hypothetical solution of a hypothetical difficulty. It is supposed that the apparent disaster of the crucifixion threatened to be fatal to the movement which Jesus had been leading, and that the Resurrection had to be brought in to save the situation. Its *raison d'être* was to be an antidote to the crucifixion. This hypothesis is contrary to all analogy. No fertile and living teaching was ever suppressed by the death of the teacher. It was quite possible, and it



was very foolish to put Jesus to death. But it was impossible by His death to suppress His teaching. Further, there was no situation to save. The few hours that elapsed between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection had given the situation no time to develop. That the disciples were feeling so far no need of the Resurrection may be inferred from the obstinate incredulity with which they received the report of it. If they had really wanted it or needed it, they would have been much more ready to welcome it. Whatever the object of the Resurrection was, we have no evidence that it was to reanimate a movement which had given no signs of expiring, or even to assist the establishment of a Church which for all we can see would not have failed to emerge without its assistance. Its importance from this point of view cannot be regarded as supreme. . . . (p. 168.) The date of the Church's foundation was not the date of the first Easter, but the date of the first Pentecost. It is Pentecost, not Easter, that is the anniversary of its birth."

## XI

DR. SPARROW SIMPSON says (*The Resurrection and Modern Thought*, p. 43) :

"It was reserved for the rationalism of the closing eighteenth century to invent the theory that Jesus did not die upon the cross, but only

fainted, and recovered consciousness in the cool and quiet of the grave. The rationalist, Venturini, constructed an independent romance, in which the invalid Jesus is carefully tended by the Essenes, and so far restored to health that He was able to show Himself to His disciples. . . . This is the school of rationalistic romance. Subject to no historical restraint, it gave free rein to its own weird imaginations. Detailed criticism would be superfluous. Keim long ago treated it as it deserved. Probably no living person could be induced to credit it. The abstract possibility of recovering after crucifixion is acknowledged. It occurred in the case of one of the friends of Josephus. But the total misrepresentation of the facts and the immoral concealment of the truth which such a theory ascribes to the disciples is surely its sufficient refutation."

Surely these are "words without knowledge." It is not the fact that the theory was invented by the rationalism of the closing eighteenth century. It was known long before. The theory that Jesus did not die upon the cross does not require that He "only fainted." It may quite conceivably have been a case of catalepsy, or even of hypnotism. "The cool and quiet of the grave" may have had nothing whatever to do with His recovery.

Probably no living person (certainly no rationalist) would treat romances such as Venturini's or the more recent one by Mr. George Moore (*The Brook Kerith*) as having any evidential value. But in this essay the theory has been carefully kept within the

words of the Gospel narratives, assuming them for this purpose to be verbally and historically accurate. If the assertion "subject to no historical restraint it gave free rein to its own weird imaginations" is applicable to any "school," it is the school which invented the theories elaborated by Vaughan and Wright.

The theory does not ascribe to the apostles total, or any, misrepresentation of the facts, or immoral, or any concealment of the truth. They no doubt reported the facts as they understood them, and told the truth as they apprehended it. No doubt they honestly believed that Jesus had died upon the cross, and acted as they believed. But they lived in a time when no distinction was recognized between actual and apparent death. What the theory requires is merely that they were mistaken in the inferences they drew from the facts.

As proofs of the reality of the death, Dr. Sparrow Simpson goes on to say: "Origen appealed to the conspicuousness of crucifixion in the presence of His nation; death was endured in full publicity 'in order that no one might have it in his power to say that Jesus withdrew from the sight of men and only seemed to die.'" But this is merely to say that a large crowd saw Jesus nailed to the cross and thought they saw Him die. No one should regard Origen otherwise than with the greatest respect, even though he was held by some to be a heretic; but the same observation applies to him and his times as to the apostles. It is singular, however, that he should be in the third century arguing against

a theory only "invented" in the close of the eighteenth.

Dr. Sparrow Simpson goes on: "Renan considered that the hatred of His enemies was sufficient guarantee to the reality of Jesus' death." No doubt they would have made it a reality if they could have caught Him, but His resuscitation was not publicly known until He was out of their reach. When Saul started on his campaign of persecution He was at Damascus, having been for some time in Galilee, away from Jerusalem.

Again, "Reville appeals to the doubts and hesitations of the disciples as to His identity. The difficulties of recognition could never have been possible if the appearances were a mere recovery without death. All the mysterious capacities of the body, its sudden manifestation and unaccountable disappearance confirm the same."

We may well ask where is the impossibility? Nothing can be more certain than the fact that the disciples did not expect to see Him again, after the depositing in the tomb. They had no idea either of a rising from the dead or of a recovery from a state of unconsciousness. In either case the result of seeing Him would be the same—they could not believe their eyes, and when they did realize that it was He Himself, alive, it was natural for them to believe that He must have risen from the dead. As I have already pointed out, "the mysterious capacities of the body," etc., are read into the narratives.

Dr. Sparrow Simpson quotes the answer given

by Strauss as "the completest refutation of the theory."

What Strauss says (1877) is this:

"It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening, and indulgences, and who still at last yielded to his suffering, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life: an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship."

If this is "the completest refutation," I confess to a feeling akin to what a chess player must experience who sees at a glance the key-move of a problem submitted to him as difficult of solution. In the first place, the theory does not postulate a being stealing half-dead out of a tomb, creeping about weak and ill, etc., or any different in appearance from the descriptions given in the Gospel narratives. Doubtless His wounds, though they would not prevent locomotion, would become painful with movement and would require the application of some ointment, healing but not necessarily miraculous, as the old legend has it—which, after all, is no more than what modern

ointment makers claim for their productions. Strauss assumes that if Jesus did not then die the disciples knew that fact; but all the accounts show that they did absolutely believe that He had died on the cross and had risen again to life. This was an inference from the facts within their knowledge, but, if it was an erroneous inference, it was probably the only one possible to them. Consequently their belief had the same effect upon their thoughts, words, and actions as if their inference were the true one. Professor Kersopp Lake remarks (*Hibbert Journal*, April, 1916, p. 637, note):

"The influence which belief has on character and conduct is in proportion to its intensity, not to its intellectual correctness; though its intellectual correctness and not the intensity with which it is held, is the final factor in deciding upon its ultimate value."

Some assert that God could not permit an erroneous belief, or as they are pleased to call it a lie, to be of use in the building up of the Faith.

To answer such an argument I call upon the Rev. F. W. Orde-Ward ("Prolegomena to an Essay on Miracles," *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1916, p. 60):

"God governs the world still, as He always has, by Illusion. When we proceed to examine this assertion, it is not so dreadful as it sounds at first hearing to uneducated ears. Never at any time of the earth's history were men prepared or even able to accept the entire truth about any subject. It had always to be local, temporary, particular, according to time and place and people and their necessi-

ties. 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' Had our Lord given his disciples or contemporaries more than imperfect and relative truths, He would have spoken in vain. He was obliged to adopt the principle of accommodation, and adjust His teaching to the language and thought of His age."

The Rev. F. W. Robertson preached a sermon on the subject of God's use of Illusion. And I have already quoted the Rev. O. Quick's view that an error in St. Paul's belief in respect of the return of Jesus served to enable him to grasp more firmly a central truth.

And a thoughtful writer, well known in Australia, Mr. Alfred J. Taylor, of Hobart, says (*Some Thoughts Towards a Readjustment of our Religious Beliefs*, Hobart, 1912):

"One of the pleasing signs of the times, to my mind, is the growing disregard of beliefs once regarded as being essential to man's salvation, and a fuller valuation of the very simple truths which have to do with that at-one-ment with God the Father the possibility of attaining to which gives to man his only hope of ultimate perfection, and immortality. . . . Herbert Spencer has emphasized the truth that beliefs are apt to survive long after they have ceased to serve any useful purpose, and this also is particularly true of religious superstitions. That the beliefs of the past have served a useful purpose in meeting the necessities of human nature at different stages of its progress is beyond question, and God forbid that I should undervalue the help

and comfort they have been to people in days gone by. But while recognizing their value *then*, it is well for us to realize that they formed stepping-stones only, upon which we have risen to 'higher things.' Evolution works by slow differentiations, by slow methods of transition, and it is good that it is so. Sudden wrenches are avoided, and the way is gradually prepared for the changes that must inevitably take place."

And the Rev. C. F. Russell, M.A., writes ("The Doctrine of Inspiration," *The Interpreter*, July, 1916, p. 367), in reference to God's working in and through ordinary agents and events:

*"This divine activity does not, in combining with man's activity, impart to it any final or infallible character; and conversely, we must not refuse to recognize the influence of the Spirit of God in any action merely because that action is obviously transitory or imperfect."*

If indeed we believe that God the Holy Spirit is ever leading mankind into a fuller knowledge of Him, ever revealing Himself more perfectly to His children as they become more capable of apprehending Him we need not be dismayed if we find that He calls us to forget the things that are behind, and to reach forward towards the things that are to come. If we have Abraham's faith we need not hesitate to obey when we hear the voice of the Lord: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto the land that I will show thee."

## XII

THE conclusion then is that neither does evidence nor do Theological considerations require the sincere Christian to believe that Jesus died upon the cross. In maintaining this position I shall doubtless be charged with "unsettling" the faith of Christians. Those who are able to accept such propositions as those advanced by Mr. Vaughan and Dr. Wright are not likely to be influenced by anything written here, and I am not writing for such. It is for those who are unable to accept such views that I am writing—for those whose faith is already unsettled—who have been persuaded that they cannot be Christians unless they unreservedly accept dogmas which their intellect rejects. I am endeavouring to lead them back into the true faith—faith in the Person instead of belief in certain dogmas about Him—belief in Jesus as the highest manifestation of the Fatherhood of God that mankind can receive, but which mankind has not yet accepted. In the majestic language of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become children of God—to them that believe in His name" (John i. 11, 12).

I write because I share the hope that Dr. R. F. Horton expresses ("The Methods of Theological Reconstruction," *Contemporary Review*, Jan., 1917, p. 54):

"That it is possible so to restate the claims of the Christian Faith, in full view of our present knowledge and our best beliefs, that numbers of those who are at present in the dreary gulfs of doubt, or wandering far away in other directions to find peace for their souls, may be brought back to a Christian Faith."

I write, too, because I fain would be counted in the increasing numbers of earnest men who are looking forward to a New Reformation. These mortal eyes will not behold its accomplishment; but, as Miss Picton Turberville says ("The Coming Order in the Church of Christ," *Nineteenth Century and After*, Sept. 1916, p. 521):

"Every century has had its movements which, though scorned by many, have filled others of its generation with bright hopes for the future, and as we study these movements it is borne in on us again and again that nearly all of them, though often failures from the point of view of the generation in which they flourished, did indeed pave the way for wider freedom and for larger hope. The century in which we live is no exception."

What wider freedom and larger hope we are looking forward to a few quotations will show.

I have already referred to Mr. Meredith Davies' article (*Hibbert Journal*, Oct., 1914, p. 214), so need not repeat his expressions.

Sir Oliver Lodge writes ("Suggestions towards the Reinterpretation of Christian Doctrine," *Hibbert Journal*, 1904, p. 461):

"Now that religion is becoming so much more real,

is being born again in the spirit of modern criticism and scientific knowledge, may it not be well to ask whether the formal statement of some of the doctrines we have inherited from mediæval and still earlier times cannot be wisely and inoffensively modified? There is usually some sort of forced sense in which almost any statement can be judged to have in it an element of truth, especially a statement which embodies the beliefs of many generations. But when the element of truth is quite other than had been supposed, and when the original statement has to be tortured in order to display it, it may be time to consider whether without harm its mode of expression can be reconsidered and readapted—to the ultimate benefit indeed of that religion of truth and clearness to which we all seek to attain."

Professor J. A. Lindsay writes (*Contemporary Review*, Sept., 1913) on "The Unreality of Much Religious Teaching":

"Christianity is not a 'corpus' of defined dogmas—although that view is held by many. Rather is it a seed which grows and is fully capable of adapting itself to the changing environment of each successive age. It is an inspiration, an uplift of the human spirit, a new ideal for humanity, and only its outward vesture and its accretions can be affected by the progress of science and the growth of knowledge. But nothing short of disaster and inevitable discredit and decay can attend any presentation of Christianity which involves an unreal view of nature, of the world and history, and a false and dishonouring

portraiture of man. I contend that adaptation to its environment is both possible and indispensable, that the present chaotic condition of religious thought and teaching is a source of fatal weakness, that a restatement of the Christian position has become necessary. The present age recognizes the limitations of the human intellect more fully than past ages. It is saturated with the conceptions of science; it thinks on scientific lines; it has some conception when the premises warrant a conclusion. It is quite prepared to admit that many questions are outside the range of our present knowledge and intelligence, and may be for ever insoluble. But it craves sincerity, a resolute facing of facts, moderation in statement, and a suspense of judgment where the evidence is weak. It is impatient of evasion, of platitude, and of mere dogmatic assertion. It does not believe that in any department of knowledge or thought the truth can really hurt. Religion suffers at present from an ever-haunting sense of insecurity and unreality. The shadow of doubt lies across all the creeds. The good ship which carries the precious cargo of man's spiritual hopes labours in the trough of the waves, because it is overweighted with so much accumulated lumber from the past. The storm grows ever fiercer, the rigging is rent, and the seams gape, the crew is sometime in despair. But the good ship will arrive—lightened of much of its superfluous burden. Mankind cannot do without the cargo which she carries."

The Rev. Hensley Henson, now Bishop of Here-

ford, referring to Biblical Criticism, writes ("The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Hibbert Journal*, 1904, p. 477):

"We who are religious teachers ought to accept it frankly and gladly. Nor need we be greatly disturbed if such acceptance involve the abandonment of many traditional beliefs. Every generation is responsible for its treatment of its opportunities; it cannot shelter itself behind the decisions of the past. Thus it appears altogether irrelevant to object to the conclusions of modern research and legitimate criticism that they do not coincide with theories of former ages, in which men neither possessed the knowledge nor were afflicted with the problems of the modern church. 'Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, yea and forever.' The vicissitudes of human history cannot affect the core of religion. 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' He said. Discipleship finds its security where it found its inspiration, in conscious relation with the living Lord."

Dr. Diggle, Bishop of Carlisle, uses similar language in his article on "Biblical Criticism" (*The Interpreter*, January, 1915), which concludes with the following passage:

"Biblical criticism, so long as it is reverent and is careful for nothing but the service of truth and the glad tidings of God to men, is a greater emancipator and a glorious herald. By casting down the strongholds of carping traditions, it is preparing the way—the way of freedom, faith, and love—for the prophets of a larger hope and a vaster Church;

the Church of the whole brotherhood of men anchored in the assurance of the universal Fatherhood of God."

The Ven. Dr. Bindley says (*The Commminatory of St. Vincent of Lerin*, Introduction, pp. xiv-xv):

"Each age is bound in accordance with the development of its spiritual consciousness and insight, to scrutinize, reform, and readapt the work of its predecessors, inasmuch as revelation is continuous, marching side by side with the advance of knowledge. To assert that revelation or inspiration has ceased, or that it was confined to the earliest days of the Church, or to the age of the councils, is to give the lie to Christ's own promise of the guidance of His Spirit, and of His own Presence with His Church all the days, even unto the end of the world."

The Rev. C. F. Russell, M.A., writes ("The Doctrine of Inspiration," *The Interpreter*, July, 1916, pp. 367-8):

"Christian people commonly believe that the early Church, either collectively or in the persons of its leaders, was the subject of Divine guidance, and some believe also (though this is unfortunately less common) that the experience was no isolated phenomenon, but has been continued in greater or less degree through all the centuries of the Church's life. Christ Himself promised that this should be so. 'The spirit of truth shall guide you,' He said, 'into all the truth.' Yet even here, in the history of the earliest Christian centuries, we cannot get

away from the principle of limitation. Judgments that were given, plans that were formed, statements that were made, cannot now be treated as infallible, however serious their occasion may have been and however undisputed the Holy Spirit's guidance. They may have been right in their own day, and yet not final but actually intended in the Divine plan to be thereafter superseded. They may have been wisely adapted to the circumstances and capacities of the age. But however that may be, it is at any rate illegitimate for us to assert that because the hand of God can be plainly seen in those early days of the Church's life, we are now bound in any final way by its decisions. If the course of events should reopen a question upon which even the Apostles pronounced, its renewed discussion would not be proscribed. For the fact is that an infallible Church—even an infallible Church of the first century—presents exactly the same difficulties, and is open to the same criticisms as an infallible Bible. It is not in harmony with what we have learnt of the method which God has adopted in His dealings with men.

“What, then, is the relation in which we stand to our own spiritual ancestors, rich as they are in wisdom, in strength, in achievements? It is simply this—that we look to them for counsel and advice. We acknowledge the wealth of their experience, the closeness of their communion with God; we shall not unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly disagree with them; but after we have given to their counsel the deepest, the most respectful attention, we shall

decide for ourselves. To deny our right in such a case is to deny our belief in God's spirit as living and active still. Moreover—let it be admitted at once—it may be that our decision will not coincide with theirs. Yet we dare not on that account shrink from our responsibility; and our appeal to the past will ever be this: ‘Tell us all that you know—and leave us free.’”

The Rev. J. R. Cohu, M.A., writes (“Is This War a ‘Visitation’ of God?” *The Interpreter*, Jan., 1917, pp. 134-5):

“Our quarrel is not with Catholic or Reformation teaching, but with our Church to-day for not catching the spirit of these wise, strong, good men of old, and doing as they did, and as bravely. The strong and living Church of the Councils and the Reformation led and inspired the men of their generation, confirmed their loyalty to God, and sustained their Christian courage in grave crises, by clearly and authoritatively speaking to them in a language abreast of the highest needs, aspirations, and convictions of their day. Face to face with new conditions, they were not afraid to restate the old theology, disburdening it of its dead values, absorbing new light, new forces, new elements. Our Church must do the same thing to-day if she is to be God's living witness to men whose new learning has given them a new nature, a new Bible, a new and deeper conception of God, a new universe with which our traditional theology is all but out of touch. William James well says: ‘The theological machinery that spoke so livingly to our ancestors, with its finite age



of the world, its creation out of nothing, its juridical morality and eschatology, its relish for rewards and punishments, its treatment of God as an external contriver, sounds as odd to most of us as if it were some outlandish savage religion.' And it is not only men of William James' intellectual calibre who think and say this; an educated public opinion feels that our theology is lagging far behind the best intellectual and moral needs and convictions of to-day. Is it any wonder that the old catchwords and formulas have lost their hold in men's hearts, or that men easily cast off a traditional and unassimilated faith which has long sat very loosely on their shoulders and which does not satisfy their present requirements? And all this shipwrecking of faith simply because the Church will not put new wine into new bottles. The dogmas of the Councils and Reformation expressed eternal truths, but in words that satisfied their generation and do *not* satisfy us to-day, precisely because their formulas exactly reflected the limitations as well as the better features of that day. All we have to do is to translate these same eternal truths into our own words and ideas; thus only will they retain their true meaning for us. 'Let us thank God,' says Westcott, 'that He has called us to unfold a growing message, not to rehearse a stereotyped tradition'; and again: 'No formula which expresses clearly the thought of one generation can convey the same meaning even to the generation that follows.' Yet here is our Church to-day the timid echo and pale copy of the fourth or sixth century,

just as if for all these hundreds of years God's enlightening Spirit had ceased to shine among men."

In the same number Professor Maurice Canney says (*Tears and Laughter*, p. 153):

"I am one of those who believe that the Christianity of Christ has never been tried fairly. The Christianity that we know is not His, and in it there is much that is flabby, maudlin, and thoroughly unhealthy. . . . Beliefs which are held no longer even by the most orthodox Churchmen seem still to colour the language and darken the thought of preachers."

The testimony of such a cloud of witnesses to the necessity for a New Reformation might be indefinitely extended. Even such a conservative organ as *The Australian Church Standard* admits (Jan. 14, 1916):

"Even the most orthodox and mediævally minded Roman Catholic feels no shock to his faith in a thing which would have been inconceivable to his ancestors five hundred years ago. Of course the lines of future development are hidden from us to-day; old faiths, old phrases, old loyalties retain their hold upon us, and such things are not to be lightly thrown away as worthless; there is something divine and therefore precious in them. But in travail of heart and soul, of thought and prayer, we must face the future with the words ever ringing in our ears: 'The former things are passed away. . . . Behold I make all things new.' . . . We must remember, too, His words about new wine and old

bottles, and realize that to-day in the winepress of God new wine is being pressed."

Nor is the testimony confined to the Church of England. The Rev. W. B. Selbie, Principal of Mansfield College, in his Presidential Address to the Annual Council of the Free Churches, March 13, 1917, says:

"There is no denying the fact that the Churches have lost grip and power. . . . The modern man has no use whatever for our evasions, reservations, and traditionalism, and we must shake ourselves free of all these things if we are to make the dry bones of our religion live."

### XIII

It may be asked: Supposing the New Reformation looked for by these visionaries does come to pass in the more or less future, and assuming that the majority will then accept as a fact that Jesus did not die upon the cross—what alterations would then have to be made in the formularies and the doctrines of the Church?

It goes without saying that the process begun by the framers of the Nicene Creed—the elimination of all explicit statement of the death of Jesus on the Cross—must be extended to all the formularies, and the doctrines be restated in terms of suffering or crucifixion instead of death. Such dogmatic statements as the fourth Article of the Church of England

must go, one good result being that Mr. Knox would no longer be compelled to believe that the earth is so many pounds the lighter since the "Ascension." But it is remarkable how little essential change beyond those of form would be required by such a change of belief.

This view is supported by the following passage from the Rev. W. Temple's book, *The Faith and Modern Thought*, pp. 78-80:

"The only conceivable explanation of the gathering together of the Apostles as the nucleus of the Christian Church is that Christ was actually alive and in communion with His friends. There is nothing else that can possibly account for that fact; and if that fact is unaccountable, then history from that day to this is unaccountable. Unless we are prepared to give up all efforts to think scientifically and to find causes for events, we must see that what these people believed was that Christ was in communion with them again as really as He had ever been; and this belief could only arise if the fact were so. . . . Of course there are inconsistencies in the story; it would be monstrous to demand anything else; but what stands out all through is that time and again they were convinced of the presence of the Lord amongst them as they cannot have been convinced unless He was there. And then, following upon that, there is the story of the empty tomb and the risen Body. It all fits in; it all harmonizes. We may find it difficult to understand it, or to picture to ourselves exactly what it was that happened. I do not know why we should

very much wish to do so ; for religious purposes, what matters is that the Lord was alive. So far as I can see it does not matter very much what became of His body. I do not doubt that His body was in some way risen and glorified ; but if anybody finds this incredible, that need not prevent him from believing in the reality of the Lord's resurrection. That the Lord was alive seems to me certain."

The necessary alterations would not involve in the Christology worked out by St. Paul any material changes. His great doctrines—that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, would remain untouched. In fact, I am convinced that if Paul had believed that Jesus did not die upon the cross his Christology would have been essentially the same, only expressed in different terms ; and further, that if it had been possible in his day for him to have so believed, he would have welcomed the thought, and it would have relieved him of much difficulty. The Rev. James B. Grant, M.A., B.D., writes ("The Equation of Easter and Pentecost," *The Interpreter*, Jan., 1917, p. 167) :

"The Resurrection, in fact, was both inadequate and irrelevant to the needs of the time in which the foundations of the Church were laid. . . . Embarrassed by the obvious difficulty of its meagre content, Paul made a singularly bold attempt to find in it at least an ethical inspiration. Thus, for instance (Col. iii. 1, R.V.) : 'If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of

God.' Now, to rise in the flesh from the tomb is an event of one order, to be quickened from the death of sin to the life of righteousness is an event of another order, and while one may indeed illustrate, it can neither induce nor inspire the other."

And the Rev. J. R. Cohu warns us ("Should Women Speak in Church?" *Contemporary Review*, Oct., 1916, pp. 479-80) :

"We are making a fetish of Paul's theology, exactly as the Jews did of the Mosaic law. Neither the one nor the other said : what is true to me must be true to all men and eternally true in the form in which I have framed it. . . . Even a Paul could not escape from the limitations of his place and time. No blame to him if the wisdom of his generation is at times the folly of ours, but he would be the first to blame us for that idolatry of his letter which quenches the quickening spirit that in nineteen hundred years has realized for us much that he only hoped for. . . . I am sure that were Paul here to-day he would be the first to tell us : Do not exalt my theology of nineteen hundred years ago into a fetish. Remember my own rule : 'Prove all things—even the Bible's—hold fast that which is good.' Retain all that is of permanent value in my teaching, discard its perishable and local elements. Treasure my 'gold, silver, and precious stones,' but do not garner my 'wood, hay, and stubble.' Hold fast to the principles and substance of my teaching, adapt its form and letter to the needs and convictions of your day."

The Rev. Dr. R. F. Horton also writes ("Methods

of Theological Reconstruction," *Contemporary Review*, Jan., 1917, p. 62) :

"We need not be bound by any supposed infallibility of the Gospel records. The divergencies of the four Evangelists warn us against such an error. Nor need we fall into the solecism of supposing that, because Paul or the other Apostles knew Christ and bring us to Him, all they heard about Him was correct, or all they thought about Him was true."

#### XIV

THERE remains the question : If Jesus did not die upon the cross, how, where, and when did He withdraw from this earthly stage of existence ?

We must admit that we have no evidence to enable us to answer. For myself, I am content to believe that, being Man, He passed through the same gate—"The strait and dreadful pass of death"—that all other of human kind must go through on the journey from the earthly phase to that higher phase of endless existence which we speak of as the Heavenly Life, of which we can only form some faint conception by the use of metaphors and analogies. Anything further can only be mere conjecture, akin to the foolish questionings which are unprofitable and vain.

But I must here notice the old legend which I have before referred to. A modern version of it was

given in the periodical *The East and the West* some years ago. Briefly, it is to the effect that Jesus did not die on the cross, but recovered under treatment, a miraculous ointment being applied to His wounds, which healed in the space of forty days ; that He journeyed to India to preach to the lost tribes of Israel ; and eventually died at Srinagar, where a tomb is pointed out to this day as His.

Though I do not know of any evidence tending to establish the substantial truth of this account, I desire to point out that there is nothing unreasonable or improbable about it. We are told from other sources that there are to the present day in Afghanistan and Bactria tribes of unmistakable Hebrew type. It is surprising to find the number of passages in the New Testament writings which, if they do not corroborate the story, at least are consonant with it. Is it unreasonable then to suppose that Jesus, finding it unsafe to remain in Judæa or Galilee longer than the forty days during which He is said to have instructed His disciples in the things concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts i. 3), should feel called to carry the message of the Kingdom to the lost tribes of the House of Israel ?

The Rev. R. A. Knox makes a suggestion (*Some Loose Stones*, pp. 116-7) for which I am sincerely grateful, though somewhat surprised to find such *lumen ex Nocte*. He says :

"As I firmly believe that all the three Synoptists were in the habit of arranging the sayings of Jesus, not in an external order based on the time when they were delivered, but on an internal connection

of subject-matter, I do not find it hard to conceive that St. John has given us the right form, and also the right context of this prophecy" (the Coming of the Son of Man) "viz. after the Resurrection; that the Evangelists, or their common source (whether our own St. Mark or some other), tacked this mention of the coming of the Son of Man on to another mention of it which occupies the preceding verse in each case. Further, that they represented the actual words in a slightly distorted form."

The same reasoning will apply with even greater force to the writings of the author of the Fourth Gospel, who composed long discourses as suitable for the various occasions on which he represents Jesus as having uttered them, doubtless incorporating in them remembered or recorded sayings of His, probably, however, "representing the actual words in a slightly distorted form."

Now we find these sayings: "It is expedient for you that I go away" (John xvi. 7). "Whither I go ye know the way" (xiv. 4). "Whither I go ye cannot come" (xiii. 33). "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring" (x. 16). And on another occasion He spoke of being sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matt. xv. 24). I do not find it hard, therefore, to conceive that during His intercourse with His disciples after His resurrection He explained to them how necessary it was for Him to go away for their sakes as well as for His own; that He heard His Father's voice sending Him to seek their lost kindred in the East; that it was impossible for them for the same

reasons to accompany Him, but that He fully expected to return to them when it should be safe to do so; that He gave leave to the impetuous Peter, or perhaps to the devoted Thomas, to follow Him and bring the news when they should be dead who sought His life. It is related of Thomas that he did afterwards visit India and other Eastern countries.

As the parting of Jesus from His disciples at Bethany afterwards became transformed into an Ascent into Heaven, so, I have no doubt, His expectation of His return to Judæa in course of time became the foundation of the expectation of His *parousia* from Heaven.

After the parting at Bethany, we next find Him, according to St. Matthew's and St. John's Gospels, in Galilee. The former tells of the meeting at the appointed place; the supplement to the latter relates the meal at His camp-fire by the sea of Tiberias. Probably the necessity for His departure was again mentioned, and Peter was commissioned to shepherd the sheep Jesus was leaving, and perhaps, too, the promise was renewed that he should follow at a later period. Neither of these narratives suggests any difference in His physical condition from what it was before the crucifixion.

We next come to the mysterious but important event on the Damascus road, which changed the relentless persecutor Saul into the devoted Apostle Paul. St. Luke, who is generally accepted as the author of Acts, gives three accounts, differing in important details, one being his own historical

narrative, the other two representing speeches made by Paul on certain occasions. It is impossible to regard these speeches as Paul's own accounts of the event, but probably they are based on information given by Paul to his friend and companion, Luke. No doubt he used the familiar metaphor of a bright light shining upon him, and spoke of scales falling from his eyes, but he seems to have been extremely reticent as to this momentous experience in his life. He incidentally refers to it in some of his Epistles, but he nowhere suggests that this light which he saw was external. In his Epistle to the Galatians (i. 7) he says: "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him to the Gentiles." This seems to indicate that the light which he saw was mental.

But he does claim to have beheld Jesus (ἐώρακα and ὤφθην), and doubtless this was the occasion referred to—or, at least, one of the occasions; and he places his seeing of Him in the same category with the manifestations to the other Apostles. It is probable that he regarded Jesus as no longer "flesh and blood," but as clothed in the "spiritual body," for he speaks of having received the Gospel which he preached not from man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. Luke represents him as having received a message from Jesus through Ananias, but Paul speaks of it as a commission received directly from Jesus.

It must be obvious that the details of Luke's narrative cannot be accepted as being literally correct. He represents Ananias as seeing Jesus

"in a vision," but he tells the rest of the story as if it was an actual conversation between two persons, and makes Ananias deliver the message without any suggestion that it was received in a vision. "The Lord hath sent me—Jesus who was seen by thee on the way as thou camest." Luke omits all reference to the journey into Arabia, which Paul evidently regarded as an important episode, but represents him as—after a stay of some days with the Damascus disciples—immediately preaching in the Synagogues.

I suggest the following as an adequate explanation of the story of Saul's conversion: Jesus, finding He could no longer remain with safety in Galilee, started on His journey to visit the lost tribes of Israel in the East, *viâ* Damascus, where He remained a considerable time, long enough to make disciples of Ananias and others. This may have been the reason why the commission was sent by the Jewish authorities to carry on persecution there. Jesus knowing of his approach, went out, like Elijah of old, to meet His enemy Saul; the result of His wonderful personal power being the conversion of the persecutor into a disciple. The intercourse between them probably continued for some days, in the house of Ananias, or wherever Jesus was residing.

The arrival of the commission, however, showed Jesus that it was no longer safe for Him to remain in Damascus, and He proceeded towards Babylon on His way to the East. I suggest that Paul accompanied Him part of the way, receiving further in-

struction concerning the Kingdom, and that this was the journey into Arabia spoken of in the Epistle to the Galatians, and that this was the occasion Paul refers to when he declares (Gal. i. 11, 12): "The Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man; for I neither received it from man nor was I taught it, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I suggest that Paul entertained the expectation that Jesus would eventually return from the Eastern visit, but as years passed by without His reappearance, this expectation became transformed into the expectation of a *parousia* from Heaven; which in its turn seems to have been replaced by his increasing consciousness of the ever-abiding spiritual presence of Jesus in the members of His Church.

It may be asked how is it that Paul does not more plainly allude to this personal intercourse with Jesus, if it actually took place? I believe it is because he regarded that intercourse as too sacred to be spoken of; as he said, referring to another occasion, he heard unutterable words, such as it is not permitted to man to talk of.

"Something seal'd  
The lips of that Evangelist."

Professor Swete makes a similar suggestion as to the silence of Peter and James in regard to the appearance of Jesus to them (*The Appearance of our Lord*, p. 88).

The explanation here suggested of the story of

Paul's conversion is supported by Johannes Weiss (*Paul and Jesus*, p. 31): "Paul's vision and conversion are psychologically inconceivable except upon the supposition that he had been actually and vividly impressed by the human personality of Jesus."

Similarly, Professor J. J. Findley holds (*Hastings' Dict. Bib.*, "Paul," Vol. III): "The conversion of Saul is a psychological and ethical problem the solution of which is to be found only in the actual appearance of Jesus Christ to his senses on the way to Damascus, as he believed this to have taken place." But it does not at all follow, as some writers insist, that this was a supernatural appearance. All conditions are fulfilled if it was Jesus, still walking this earth, in the same body of flesh and blood which He inhabited before the crucifixion, Who appeared to Saul.

However, I submit these suggestions, not as any proof of the truth of the Eastern legend, but to rebut the idea that there is any taint of "weird imagination" in it; and to show that there is a reasonable degree of probability in it, such as would justify a sincere Christian who is troubled with doubts as to the actuality of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in accepting it in preference to the "Catholic" dogma.

But I must repeat that we do not know. It may be that after preaching to the lost tribes of the House of Israel in those remote regions Jesus died at Srinagar, and was buried in the tomb that now bears His name. It may be that He never left His

Galilean refuge, but suffered a lingering death from His wounds at His lonely camp-fire by the Tiberian Lake, or on some solitary mountain summit, or in some secluded valley, and that "no man knoweth of His sepulchre until this day." We do not know ; and perhaps it is well that we do not. The Church has, at least, been preserved from relic-worship of His bones ; and to His unknown resting-place we may address the closing lines of Mrs. Alexander's beautiful poem on the Burial of Moses :

"Oh lonely tomb ! . . .  
Speak to these curious hearts of ours  
And teach them to be still.  
God hath His mysteries of grace,  
Ways that we cannot tell ;  
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep  
Of him He loves so well."